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MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 26, 1980

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INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI *ZB*

SUBJECT:

The Carter Transformation of Our  
Strategic Doctrine

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Good - Shan  
Ed,  
VP, Harrel  
J*

I want to summarize for you the fundamental change occurring in U.S. strategic doctrine over the last three years. You may or may not want to take public credit for it, but you should have a clear view in your own mind of its historic significance. That is being obscured and confused in the public fuss over PD-59, the last of a series of related directives you have signed. *(et)*

#### The Requirement for Change

There have been two previous transformations in our strategic doctrine. The first, "massive retaliation," occurred in the 1950s under President Eisenhower. It was designed to deter the Soviets by our large lead in nuclear weapons and strategic bombers. The second, "assured destruction," was sponsored in the 1960s by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson as they watched Soviet forces grow and the U.S. lead shrink. Secretary McNamara designed the concept primarily as a budgetary instrument to decide "how much was enough?" in strategic forces. The doctrinal notion was added by others. They, however, believed the Soviets would stop their buildup at near our force levels. When they did not and when they introduced new qualitative capabilities, the doctrine lost much of its relevance. To revise our doctrine then became a critical although unpopular task in face of the continuing Soviet buildup through the 1970s. You have accomplished this through a number of directives which put much more emphasis on objective capabilities to reinforce the subjective and psychological aspects of deterrence. *(et)*

#### What Has Been Done

Based upon reviews and recommendations from the agencies, in response to conceptualization and coordination by the NSC, you have directed (a) that we maintain "essential equivalence" in general purpose and strategic force levels (PD-18); that strategic defense is part of the overall military balance (PD-41); that national objectives be met for telecommunications to support all levels of conflict (PD-53); that mobilization planning guidance be developed for all agencies, DOD being only one of them (PD-57); that a conceptually new approach be

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applied to "continuity of government" and maintenance of the National Command Authority under nuclear attack (PD-58); that a significant step be taken in the evolutionary process of our targeting policy (PD-59). An elaboration of each of these is important to give you a more textured appreciation of the overall policy changes. (e)

PD-18, signed in August 1977, put stress on reversing the conventional force balance adverse trends in Europe, acquiring a U.S. rapid deployment force, and maintaining strategic force "essential equivalence" in face of the continuing Soviet buildup. It directed a number of follow-on efforts, because, as PRM-10 showed, the implications of "parity" with the USSR were complex and needed several additional U.S. responses. (e)

PD-41, on civil defense policy, signed in September 1978, revived the view that defensive capabilities are part of the strategic balance, even if only a small part. The idea of "defense" was abandoned in the 1960s after serious attention to it by both President Eisenhower and, for a time, President Kennedy. Studies by CIA corroborated the Soviet open literature about Soviet civil defense capabilities, and a dispersed Soviet population, even partially dispersed, might make a difference of tens of millions of initial survivors. Changes in our targeting could not reduce the difference significantly. (e)

PD-53, national security telecommunications policy, was signed in November 1979. It set forth, for the first time, national C<sup>3</sup>I objectives which Defense, as the executive agent of the National Communications System (set up by Kennedy after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 when he found agencies with separate and non-interoperable communications systems, a paralyzing condition for his control), has the responsibility to implement, not only in its C<sup>3</sup>I programs but also with guidance to common carriers on interoperability and survivability for crisis and war. PD-53 changed fundamentally the objective of telecommunications heretofore: sufficient to communicate an execution message for a retaliatory strike but nothing more for endurance, flexibility, and a prolonged conflict. (U)

PD-57, mobilization planning guidance, signed in March 1980, tasked the first work on mobilization guidance at the national level since the 1950s. Treated as less than a serious issue, even in the Defense Department until lately, mobilization responsibilities in other agencies, although critical for wartime, had long been a joke. As the Soviet buildup cancelled our superiority, the joke became a dangerous one, undercutting our credibility in the eyes of careful foreign observers. Little concrete result has been achieved to date, but the level of serious interest is surprisingly high after PD-57's emergence. A parallel achievement in manpower mobilization has been the draft registration law. It is a major step. (e)

PD-58, Continuity of Government/C<sup>3</sup>I, signed this June, initiates a wholly new conceptual approach to making the National Command Authority and the Presidency for civil government survivable under conditions of



repeated nuclear attack. The existing system built in the 1950s, was judged vulnerable already by 1962 in a report to President Kennedy. President Nixon received a similar report in 1970 but failed to act on it. Neither report offered a solution to the problem of hard-site vulnerability. Until the new system is built and tested, it is doubtful that the U.S. could ride out a well-conceived Soviet attack on our national C<sup>3</sup>I, carry through to a third or fourth ranking successor if need be, and retaliate in a coordinated manner. Even if we were lucky enough to do that, the staff support for the Presidency to mobilize, control the forces, and govern the civil sector is lacking. PD-58 requires the development of precisely that support. (S)

PD-59, the nuclear weapons employment policy directive, completes the series. It is, to some extent, an addition to NSDM-242, the first effort at "limited" nuclear options taken in 1974 by Nixon and Schlesinger. I want to spell out for you in some detail the differences between the two directives, however, because there are claims already being made that PD-59 is nothing new, just a rehash of NSDM-242. (C)

NSDM-242 kept the old theoretical baggage, trying to make a limited "retaliatory" or even a first-use strike more credible as the SIOP became less credible. Could the U.S. public sit calmly through such LNOs, having not even civil defense protection? NSDM-242 was a misconceived document. It merely exaggerated the flaws of the SIOP. PD-59 is fundamentally different, while not designed to be a "war fighting" doctrine, it takes into account Soviet employment doctrine because, with the Soviet acquisition of such large and accurate forces, that doctrine cannot be ignored if deterrence is to be maintained. To fail to make this change would be to risk drifting into a situation where our doctrine and capabilities could, in a crisis, deter ourselves more than the Soviets. (C)

In summary, you have taken a series of steps that add up to a major revision of our strategic doctrine, the third one since World War II. The previous two, like this one, have been driven by Soviet force development. This is the first phase of the task. The second, the programmatic phase, will be a major task of your second-term defense policy. (C)